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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000976

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TIBETAN REFUGEES

REF: KATHMANDU 497

Classified By: Ambassador Michael E. Malinowski, Reasons 1.5 (b), (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Tibet border is "very quiet" and most newly arrived refugees have not faced problems, according to UNHCR and the Office of Tibet. Nepali police garnered praise for their efforts to escort a large group of Tibetans from the Nangpa region to Kathmandu, an operation which UNHCR hopes marks a return to "normal procedures." News of the troubling security situation in Nepal could be a factor in the decline of refugee arrivals, UNHCR believes. Lawyers from a leading human rights organization plan to litigate the case of eleven Tibetan refugees from India jailed on immigration violations. End Summary.

Return to "Normal Procedures" as Police Escort 29

¶2. (C) The refugee situation on the Tibet border is "very quiet," according to both a UNHCR protection officer and the Office of Tibet representative. Most new arrivals have not faced any problems. During the week of May 12, police escorted a group of 29 refugees from the Amdo region of Tibet to Kathmandu without incident, UNHCR confirmed. The group had crossed into Nepal at Nangpa Pass. The Office of Tibet was "pleasantly surprised" to learn that the police treated the group very well and even provided them with food and water. UNHCR noted that recently there have been few instances of police escorting Tibetan refugees to the capital. UNHCR hoped that last week's incident marked a return to the "normal procedures" previously in effect.

¶3. (C) The Tibet Office noted that in the previous week a small group of five or six crossing at Nangpa Pass had been robbed of all their money. Even so, this group was able to reach Kathmandu for onward processing.

¶4. (C) The number of new arrivals at the Tibetan Reception Center in Kathmandu continues to be off compared to previous years. UNHCR Kathmandu commented May 20 that explanations for the decline vary, but it could be that people in Tibet have heard news of the troubling security situation in Nepal.

Still No Prospects for Eleven Jailed Tibetans

¶5. (C) There has been no change in the status of eleven Tibetan refugees from India jailed by Nepal on immigration charges (Reftel). Lawyers from the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) see litigation as the only possible solution and plan to take the case to court.

MALINOWSKI